TWO ESSAYS,

ONE ON

CONVERSATION,

The Other, On

SOLITUDE.

By a GENTLEMAN of *Oxford*.

Nunquam minus Solus, quam cum Solus.

LONDON:

Printed for the Author: And Sold by EDWARD OWEN, at the Printing-Office, near *Chancery-Lane*, *Holborn*; And by the Bookfellers of *London*, and *Westminster*. M,DCC,XLIV.

[Price One Shilling.]

BRITISH MUSEUM
1852
20 50

An ESSAY, ON CONVERSATION.

ONE would imagine from conſidering the Make and Nature of a human Soul, that there ſhould be a conſtant Spring of Entertainment ariſing in the Mind ſufficient to relieve and amuſe us in our moſt ſolitary Hours. Such an inexhauſtable Fund of Ideas as we have always at our command, muſt be certainly able to ſupply us with the moſt delightful, and amazing Theatre for Obſervation and Reflection. Add to this, that we can ſhift the Scene as often as we pleaſe, and call in all the Charms of Variety to delight and improve us. When we are ſatiated with one range of Ideas, we can eaſily turn our Thoughts upon another, and quit, or purſue the Objects of our Fancy juſt as we happen to be incited to, or fatigued with the Courſe. The Stupendous Works of Nature,

and Adminiſtrations of Providence, afford an ample Field of Contemplation to the Mind. And tho' we cannot poſſibly take in the whole Syſtem of Things, and are therefore often loſt and perplex'd in Mazes, yet much may be diſcovered, and a great many ſeeming Irregularities unravell'd and explain'd. The ſtronger and weaker Lights of Revelation and Reaſon will carry us on very far in our Journey; and we ſhall make very Satisfactory Diſcoveries, if we are contented to return back again as ſoon as they leave us: This, then, among an infinite Number of others equally unbounded and entertaining, is one of the great Sources of Pleaſure and Improvement to a Reaſonable Creature. But becauſe different Diſpoſitions uſually take a different Turn, and all do not chuſe to travel on in the ſame Track of Knowledge, we ſhall find, upon Obſervation, a great many oppoſite Paths ſuited to the oppoſite Inclinations of Mankind. Thoſe few, whoſe Judgments are ſo happy, and ſo well improv'd, as to give them an Opportunity of Diſtinguiſhing between the niceſt Limits of Good and Bad, have all the different Scopes, and Tendencies of Men's Actions for Materials to work upon. Such may find an infinite Pleaſure from deſcending deep into the Characters of Men, and from being qualified to diſcover true Sterling Merit from the Counterfeit Appearances of it. Virtue and Vice admit them, as it were, into their ſecret Chambers, and act before them without the leaſt Diſguiſe or

Reſerve. Theſe, indeed, are the Employments of great Minds, and exalted Capacities, and require the favourable Opportunities of much Reflection, and Leiſure to admit of a tolerable Improvement in them. But there are other Sciences, and thoſe a greater Number, that are levelled to all Capacities, and will preſume to take in even the Bulk of Mankind for their Votaries and Admirers. Not to mention, beſides theſe, the politer Arts of Poetry, Rhetorick, Sculpture, Painting, and Muſick; every one of which, affords an elegant Entertainment to the Mind, and makes us never leſs diſengaged than when we are alone. Hiſtory throws us back to the firſt Periods of Time, and makes us converſant with the greateſt Men that have ever appeared from the Foundation of the World, It gives us, indeed, a kind of Pre-exiſtence, and makes us Cotemporary with our moſt diſtant Anceſtors. Agriculture, and Architecture, have had a great Part of the World for their Admirers; and the greateſt Philoſophers, and moſt public Stateſmen have choſe theſe for their Diverſions in the moſt vacant and diſengaged Parts of their Lives.

To give the whole Detail would be too long a Taſk, and would throw us ſtill further out of the Courſe, from which we have too much ſtarted and deviated already.

Can it then be ſufficiently admired, ſince we carry ſuch a conſtant Succeſſion of Delightful Objects within our own Mind, that Soli-

tude and Retirement ſhould be ſo exceedingly diſagreeable to us as it generally is? What mean Arts and childiſh Contrivances are we often put to in order to make away with, and deſtroy that Part of our Time which we reckon to lye upon our Hands, becauſe it happens not to be taken up in the common Affairs of Life? It is very ſurpriſing that thoſe very Men who have great and ſwelling Opinions of their own Perfections, ſhould be ſo entirely averſe to enter into an intimate Acquaintance with themſelves, that no Company in the World is half ſo diſagreeable to them. Time and Thought, which are the only Opportunities of Action to the Soul, inſtead of being embraced with the utmoſt Eagerneſs, are often thrown aſide and entirely neglected by us.

THIS may certainly be eſteemed one of the greateſt Imperfections of human Nature; but as Good very often ariſes, and is educed from Ill, we may light upon one Circumſtance, and that of no little Conſequence, in which this natural Imperfection is univerſally Advantageous to Mankind. For this Reſtleſſneſs and Impatience of ourſelves, tho' it may ſometimes put us upon mean and trifling Engagements, yet it generally has this good Effect; that the Fatigue which we receive from Converſing with our own Thoughts, prompts us to the Enjoyment of thoſe of other Men: Hence ariſe the many ſweet Civilities of Life; and this is one of the great Springs upon which human Society partly turns. An entire Inde-

pendency upon one another in reſpect to our Pleaſures, would make us proportionably as Unſociable as an entire Independancy in reſpect to the Neceſſaries of Life. Could we exempt ourſelves from Mankind, and not perceive any Inconvenience from the Loſs of them, all the mild and gentle Affections of our Nature would be entirely loſt. Upon theſe Conſiderations, then, it is happier for us on the Whole, that the Mind has not always a Diſpoſition to exert its own Capacities ſo far as to be a conſtant Relief, and Entertainment to itſelf. It is Converſation, and a mutual Interchange of our Thoughts and Affections, that knits together, and ſtrengthens the Ties and Alliances between us. This is, indeed, one of the moſt peculiar Priviledges belonging to Humanity; and Life would be intolerable without it. Thoſe who voluntarily deprive themſelves of this Bleſſing by an abſolute Confinement from the World, generally fall, at laſt, into a Diſtaſte of themſelves as well as others; and would gladly leave the wretched load of Life, where no friendly Hand aſſiſts them in the Support of it. In ſhort, where entire Solitude is the Choice, it commonly proceeds from ſome peeviſh, diſcontented, ſullen Frenzy in the Mind, or elſe produces it.

A Temporary Retirement is certainly a very valuable Pleaſure, and gives us an Opportunity of ſeeing Things through a more clear and undiſturbed Mirrour. It is this that gives

Solidity

Solidity to our Thoughts, but it is Converſation that Poliſhes, and Refines them. Men of the greateſt Capacities, and beſt adapted for Contemplation, by confining themſelves too much to their Garden, or their Cloſet, and thinking too meanly of other People's Abilities, have ſufficiently ſuffered for their Reſervedneſs, by not being able to expreſs their Sentiments upon the moſt common Occaſions. The beſt and moſt agreeable Way of encreaſing our Stock in Knowledge, is to enter into a Commerce with Mankind; and no Commerce in the World will be found ſo Advantageous as this, becauſe at the ſame Time as we receive from our Neighbour's Stock of Knowledge, even that which we had before, (contrary to the Nature of all other Merchandizes) does not leſſen but encreaſe upon our Hands by being imparted to him. Other Things are loſt to ourſelves by being communicated to another, and no longer continues our own Property. But our Thoughts, if they are ever ſo Valuable, continue ſtill to be our own, though Communicated to all about us. We, beſides this, receive the agreeable Pleaſure of Diſcovering a great many valuable Treaſures in our Mind, which if we had not put them out to uſe in this Manner, would have lain conceal'd in ſome ſecret Corner, or perhaps have entirely waſted away for want of being reviſed. Such frequent Reviews make us acquainted with the Strength, and Number of our Forces, and our Judg-

ment

ment would too often remain undiſciplin'd, if we did not exerciſe it ſometimes upon ſuch public Occaſions.

ACCORDINGLY we find the greateſt Scholars and Philoſophers never exerting their Abilities with greater Pleaſure than amidſt a narrow Circle of a few ſelect Friends. Such were the Entertainments of a *Socrates*, and a *Tully*; and *Scipio*, though the moſt Contemplative of Men, would often open himſelf to *Lælius*, and a few others. The only Difference, in this Reſpect, between ſuch as theſe, and the reſt of the World, was, that they were more delicate, in their Choice, and extended there intimate Familiarities to but very few. But this, though it may have the Show of Reſervedneſs, is very far from being ſo; at leaſt, to any vicious Degree. If it takes off ſome Superfluities from the Maſs of Friendſhip, it is only in order to refine the reſt; and ſuch Converſations, where Friendſhip and Eſteem make an agreeable Part in them, are the nobleſt Entertainments of a Rational Soul. For Such Enjoyments as theſe, we may very reaſonably imagine will be rather heigthened than loſt when we arrive at a ſuperior State. *Tully* ſeems never ſo much fir'd and raptur'd, with the Thoughts of a future Being, as when they gave him the pleaſing Expectation of enjoying once more the Converſation of thoſe very Men from whom he had received ſo much Enjoyment and Happineſs before. It was upon

con-

conſidering Futurity in this Light, that he choſe rather to be wrapt up in the Error of the Immortality of the Soul, if it ſhould prove one, than be convinced to the contrary. He had taſted of theſe Enjoyments in their utmoſt Refinement, and therefore from theſe chiefly formed his Ideas of Heaven and Happineſs, becauſe he could not poſſibly conceive any greater. He had ſufficiently experienced what an infinite Pleaſure a generous Mind received from at once communicating, and enlarging its Knowledge.

But ſuch Converſations as theſe, it may be urged, are only to be met with among thoſe who have given themſelves up to Philoſophy, and Speculation. The far greater part of the World have not Abilities ſufficient either to impart, or to receive ſuch exalted Pleaſures: And thoſe that have, very often exclude themſelves from ſuch mutual Engagements by claſhing Intereſt and oppoſite Principles. It may, perhaps, be concluded from hence, that Converſation is not ſo univerſal a Bleſſing as we may imagine: But it does by no Means follow that, becauſe every one cannot enjoy it in the ſame Degree, therefore the greateſt part of the World is entirely excluded from any Happineſs reſulting from it. It is with this, as with every Thing elſe that we reckon valuable in Life. Health and Beauty, Power and Riches, give a very diſtant Proportion of Happineſs to the different Poſſeſſors of them.

But it is very obvious to obſerve how much this Pleaſure is ſuited to the Soul, by Reflecting how ſoon it ſhews itſelf, and how late it leaves us. The half Words, and piec'd out Ideas of the Nurſe, are often ſeen to quiet and entertain the bawling Infant in its moſt froward Fits. If we take another Step in Life, we may ſee the little Miſs practiſing upon her jointed Baby the various Compliments and Forms of Speech, which ſhe had not as yet an Opportunity of acting over in Reality. When we have mounted a little higher, the various Schemes of Pleaſure and Enjoyment unite us together, and join us into little Sets and Companies. Intereſt and Buſineſs are generally the Engagements of the middle Part of Life; we are at that Time never ſo agreeably engaged as when we are interchanging our Thoughts upon thoſe Topicks, with others who appear in the ſame Character of Life with ourſelves. Old Men are the moſt Talkative of all; and we may eaſily diſcern the prodigious Pleaſure that they expreſs when they are dwelling upon ſome dear, inſignificant Story of themſelves. They are never more delighted than when they are acting, as it were, their Parts over again, and deſending into thoſe Characters in Life in which they have been formerly engaged: With what amazing Satisfaction do they recollect, relate, and attend to the ſeveral diſtant Occurrances which have happened in their ſhort Period of Exiſtence!

It is plain then, that a Taſte for theſe Social Enjoyments is not confined to any particular Part of Life, but attends us through the ſeveral Stages of it, from the Cradle to the Grave. We ſhall find it beſides ſubſiſting in all the different Conditions of Power and Fortune; and that all Tempers, as well as all Ages, do naturally give into it. Men of the greateſt Abilities, we have already obſerved, receive the greateſt Enjoyment from it; and it is equally certain, that not even the meaneſt are excluded from their particular Pleaſures in it. It would be no unpleaſing Entertainment, were it not almoſt an endleſs Engagement, to conſider the different Degrees of Refinement in Converſation, from the raw, Country Clown, who ſalutes you with a Thump upon your Back, and gives you the ſame long tedious Detail of his Dogs, and Horſes; to the polite Philoſopher who has improved his Mind with Reading and Speculation, and has Addreſs enough to give a Varniſh to every Part of Knowledge that he is acquainted with: This, however, we may perceive, that each enjoys his peculiar Happineſs in it according to his peculiar Taſte; and thoſe that are the leaſt delicate in their Choice ſeem often the moſt ſatisfied with it. For a great many Things which ſound offenſive and abſurd to nice Ears, are agreeable and entertaining to them: And though therefore their Pleaſures may not be ſo refined and delicate, yet they are much eaſier come at, as they are to be

met

met with in almoſt every one's Company: Whereas, delicate Tempers, and Men of the greateſt Capacities, like abſolute Princes, are placed on ſo high an Eminence that few are to be met with of Dignity enough to give them Pleaſure and Entertainment from converſing with them: So that it would almoſt admit of a Diſpute, whether the eaſy unlimited Pleaſures which the Vulgar receive in this reſpect, do not put them upon a Level with the moſt refined Philoſophers, whoſe eaſily offended Delicacy makes him oftener diſpleaſed than delighted.

It may, perhaps, be thought unneceſſary, in order to prove the Pleaſures of Converſation ſtill more extenſive, to ſhew that the Female World are by means denied their Part in them. They are generally repreſented as moſt illuſtriouſly ſhining, and as taking the greateſt Delight in this *Extempore* kind of Eloquence: And ſo far, I think, we may very ſafely grant, without the leaſt Suſpicion of paying them too immoderate a Regard, that the nobleſt Graces and Ornaments of Speech are upon their Account particularly preſerv'd and cultivated. A Lady's Parlour is the very beſt School of Politeneſs; and Men of very eminent Characters in Life have received ſo much Pleaſure and Improvement in it, that they have very readily ſubmitted to all the various Punctilio's of Forms and Decencies, that are to be moſt religiouſly obſerv'd in it. The only Inconvenience and Danger ariſes from

the almoſt irreſiſtible Influence of Female Eloquence: The firſt Man that fell pleaded this as a ſtrong Excuſe for the firſt Fault that had been committed in the World. All the Arts of Perſuaſion belong certainly to them in the moſt diſtinguiſh'd Manner, and here again they have the Advantage of us, that they arrive at all the various Graces and Figures of Speech as it were by Inſtinct; without any Labour or Study in the Purſuit of them: The moſt indifferent Subjects contract a kind of Dignity from paſſing through their Hands; as Tin, a baſe Material of itſelf, changes its Name, and grows a more valuable Metal, when it is work'd upon by finer Inſtruments. In ſhort, Loquacity and Volubility of Tongue, the perpetual Talents belonging to the Fairer Sex, (as faſhionable a Piece of Raillery as it is) have been very unreaſonably, becauſe univerſally rally'd and redicul'd. This is a moſt ungrateful Return for the Entertainment that they afford us. It would be more Generous at leaſt to thank them for their Favours; and to ſhew them that we have nobler Sentiments of them. This extraordinary Gift of Nature was, perhaps, particularly indulged to them as they were deſigned for the Embelliſhments of the Creation, and to ſooth and diſengage the Mind from the various Perplexities of Life.

We ſee, then, that the whole Rational World have ſomewhat implanted in their very Nature and Conſtitution, that prompts them to the mutual Enjoyment of each other's Thoughts

Thoughts and Affections. Thoſe who have entirely extinguiſh'd the ſocial Sparks, and benevolent Principles with which Nature had warmed their Breaſts, are a ſort of Monſters in the Creation, who are of ſo ſurpriſing and different a Make from the Reſt of the World, that they ſhun and are ſhun'd by every one that falls in their Way. In People, indeed, of a very melancholy Caſt, it is rather their Miſfortune, than their Fault that they avoid Society. Their Imagination is ſo diſordered and inverted, that every new Idea does but add to their Perplexity. Their whole Mind is ſo darken'd and diſcolour'd, that every Thing that enters it, puts on the ſame gloomy Appearance, and receives the Infection: Yet even theſe might receive ſome Relief from Converſation, as it would, for a Time unbend, and diſengage the Mind from that Set of Ideas which is particularly diſagreeable to them. The Fancy, as extravagant as it is at ſuch an unhappy Time, will be by this Means in ſome Meaſure confin'd from running out too far into Futurity, and from anticipating diſtant Cares and Concerns. Nor is this Uſe of Converſation confin'd only to ſuch as have their Imaginations diſtracted to any great Degree. Few Men are of ſuch ſanguine Tempers as not to carry ſome Fears about them, which, if they were entirely left to Fancy's Indulgence, would grow upon them in ſuch a Manner as to fill and over-run the Mind with dreadful Apprehenſions. Converſation therefore very ſeaſonably

ably cómes in between, and by diverting us with familiar and preſent Objects, calls us off from others that are leſs agreeable, or uſeful. When the Mind ſickens with any particular Uneaſineſs, nothing ſurely can relieve it more ſucceſſively than communicating it to ſome agreeable Friend, who, we know, has Good-nature and Judgment enough to pity and aſſiſt us with his Advice. In ſhort, there is no Circumſtance in the World but what receives ſome additional Help from ſuch mutual Engagements. If they relieve Adverſity, they add a ſtill farther Ornament to Proſperity. For a generous Mind finds more Satisfaction from its Pleaſures, by giving others a Share in them.

If there is one Part of Life in which Converſation is of more Uſe than another, it ſeems to be particularly ſo in our younger Years. This is certainly the moſt convenient and uſeful Time for Study and Converſation. For in what Part of Life is it more proper to be exercis'd and practis'd in the Ways of Men, than before we come to be actually engag'd in them? It is this that muſt prepare us againſt future Events, and make us never at a Loſs for our Behaviour. Men muſt be read, as well as Books, if we would have our Obſervations and Reflections compleat and perfect. They are the living Examples of every particular Virtue and Vice drawn out into Practice. Lectures of Morality, and the ſevere rigid Maxims of the Schools may for a Time

inflame

inflame the Mind with a ſecret Admiration of every Thing that is Praiſe-worthy, and a juſt Deteſtation of what is bad. But when we ſee ſome particular good Quality diffuſing a graceful Luſtre over a whole Character, we are ſtill the more enamour'd, and it makes a much ſtronger Impreſſion on the Fancy: We are, in a Word, affected in the ſame Manner as with the Sight of ſome compleat Beauty; who, though we have before had an exact Character of her graceful Geſtures, and the ſoft Delicacy of her Features, yet ſtrikes us with ſomething new, and turns into Rapture, what was before but a cold, lifeleſs Approbation. It is the ſame with any ill Quality, for that riſes in its Deformity when we obſerve how diſagreeable it ſets upon the Perſon who has been ſo unhappy as to fall into it. Young People therefore ſhould take particular Notice of the good Qualities and Imperfections that they find in the Characters they converſe with. For Virtue and Vice never ſhew themſelves in ſuch ſtrong Colours, as when they appear in Life, and act in Perſon.

We have done now with the Pleaſures of Converſation; and have given a ſhort, and I am afraid, an imperfect Sketch of the different Uſes and Advantages of it. This Part may, I think, be the firſt in Order, ſince it may poſſibly, as maimed and incompleat as it is, incite us to the Study of making ourſelves agreeable to one another in ſo improving and entertaining a Part of Life. It is ſo far from being

being of little Conſequence, that it is generally made inſtrumental to the Reſt, or perverted to the worſt Purpoſes.

It requires, then, no little Art to ſteer aright in ſo important a Voyage; ſince we may looſe all the good Intents and Purpoſes of it, by giving ourſelves over to ſoft and engaging Enchantments; or by not being able to diſcover the different Rocks and Shelves, which we may ſplit upon in our Way. As far as my little Bark has ſailed, I ſhould be very glad to impart a few Directions, which poſſibly may be of ſome little Uſe to thoſe (if any ſuch are to be found) who have had leſs Experience, and Opportunity of making Obſervations than myſelf.

Some Study and Application is required to form our Taſtes in ſuch a Manner as to make others agreeable to ourſelves. To be the more ſucceſsful in this Point, we muſt endeavour to make Choice of the beſt Company that we can poſſibly get: And the more delicate we are in our Choice, the more Pleaſure we ſhall receive from their Converſation. A ſmall Circle of agreeable Friends is ſufficient to make Life paſs off very pleaſantly. But it is very poſſible for us to uſe too much Delicacy in this, as well as in other Things: Though we would willingly be engag'd with none but the Beſt, we muſt endeavour ſometimes to make others agreeable to us, whoſe Sentiments, and Manner of conveying them are not ſo entertaining. A Perſon who is over ſquemiſh

upon

upon theſe Occaſions will be reckoned nice and proud, by the Generality of the World. Beſides we may poſſibly collect ſome little Gleanings of Improvement from thoſe, who ſeem the leaſt qualified to afford it; and even the worſt of Men may accidentally be the Inſtruments of Good to us, in making us wiſh ourſelves the very Oppoſites to them.

But if it requires ſome Thought and Reflection to ſuit, as well as we can, other People's Manners and Sentiments to our own, and to make their Converſation appear tolerable, who have not good Nature and good Senſe enough to be agreeable: It requires much more Art and Labour to make ourſelves agreeable to others, and to ſhun the various Tribe of Faults and Abſurdities, every ſingle one of which is ſufficient to ſully the moſt ſhining Character, and to make us ſlighted by the moſt diſcerning Part of the World.

It has been laid down as a general Rule, in order to make ourſelves agreeable to all Mankind, to put on for the Time all the different Humours and Diſpoſitions of each particular Set of Perſons that we happen to converſe with. Thus, according to this Maxim, the grave and ſerious Part of the World muſt be entertained with their own admired Gravity; and the Gay out-done if poſſible, in all their Gaieties, and lively Sallies of Imagination. With the Studious nothing muſt be commended but what is gained by the ſtricteſt Application and Study. With Men of more

volatle and unſettled Parts, the only Buſineſs is to laugh at the aukward Induſtry of the laborious Book-Worm. If *Matilda* bath'd in Tears imparts the Death of ſome favourite Lap-Dog, ſhe muſt be condoled with in the utmoſt Shew of Concern; and we muſt be ſurpriz'd at the Stupidity of the World that can be unaffected with the Loſs of ſo dear, ſo innocent a Creature. Thoſe in ſhort, who apply themſelves to this Art, with any tolerable Skill muſt have no peculiar Principles and Sentiments of their own, but like a Mirrour, reflect on the different Shapes, Figures, and Complexions of all that happen to come before them; like That, they muſt retain no Images that they receive, but be continually ſhifting and changing them in a perpetual Succeſſion of various Forms and Characters. Theſe Arts, it muſt be owned, as mean and diſingenious as they are, will often prove effectual, and meet with much greater Succeſs than they deſerve: For it is natural for us to admire the Reflection of our own Characters, and to value others for being like our ſelves: But this is far from being a genuine Eſteem, and is rather actuated by a Principle of ſelf-Love; for when we admire another upon conſidering in this Light, it is not ſo much upon his own Account, as becauſe he gives us back the dear Idea of our ſelves: And what a Heap of Inconſiſtances muſt their Character be made up off, who, inſtead of keeping to ſome uniform regular Scene of

Action,

Action, play the universal Buffoon, and are all Mankind's Epitome!

The best Art of shining in Conversation, as well as in the most important Parts of Life, is to make other People a Mirrour to our selves, and to survey all the different Deformities that appear in all Characters; such an impartial View must make us more observant of our own Conduct; for it requires but a moderate Share of Sense to avoid that very Thing which we have actually found out to be disagreeable in another: It may not be amiss therefore to draw a small Sketch of these in the following Pages; and this will be a very natural and easy Step to the Consideration of what is agreeable and graceful.

There is nothing certainly that so effectually perverts the Ends of Society, and destroys all the Uses and Advantages which we might otherwise receive from it, as Scandal and Detraction: And what adds to the Misfortune is, that this Weed, like others of the most malignant Nature, thrives in almost every Soil, and requires the utmost Cultivation to repress and stop its Growth. It must be confess'd, as disagreeable a Truth as it is, that a great Part of the World are too apt to indulge this malevolent Disposition in themselves; reigning Stories that lay waste the Reputation of whole Families, as well as private Persons, are very often the agreeable Topicks of Discourse in publick Places and polite Assemblies. Nay, it is no unusual Thing to see a good

old Lady attend very conſtantly at Prayers to expreſs her Concern at the imprudent Behaviour of half the Pariſh that ſhe lives in; but it is very much to be hoped that it does not proceed from the ſame malignant Principle in all; and that ſome are faulty in this Reſpect rather through Thoughtfulneſs, than Deſign; for otherwiſe how ſhall we be able to account for its ſometimes mixing with the moſt amiable Virtues, and ſhewing itſelf in the moſt gentle Characters? In ſuch as theſe it ſeems to proceed from an unreaſonable Compliance to the Taſte of the Company that they happen to fall into, rather than from any natural Propenſity to it in themſelves; for Men of ſprightly Imaginations, in the Whirl of Fancy or Diſcourſe, will ſometimes ſupport a Subject that is entered upon by others, though they themſelves ſecretly diſapprove of it, rather than be oblig'd to deſert their Part and appear abſent in Converſation. This ſeems to plead ſome Excuſe, but is by no Means a ſufficient Defence for ſo miſchievous an Error. Nobody, one would imagine, who had a Senſe of the cutting Tortures which Infamy and Diſgrace bring along with them, could ever maliciouſly deſtroy, or unthinkingly ſport away the Reputation of another: Thoſe Pleaſures muſt appear very diſagreeable upon Reflection which are ſo fatal in their Conſequences: And it is a moſt unmanly and inverted Ambition to exerciſe a Faculty which was deſign'd for ſo much better Uſes

to the Deſtruction of all about us. The Wounds which we give a Perſon in his Character have often this additional Malignity attending them, that whilſt they are expos'd to every one elſe, they are conceal'd from himſelf; and he has not upon that Account an Opportunity of Repairing them; and if he is made ſenſible of them, they are very often ſo prodigiouſly envenom'd, that it only increaſes his Agony, without any Poſſibility of a Cure. That Perſon has entered into but a ſlight Acquaintance with his own Character, who imagines himſelf a common Friend to Mankind, and yet at the ſame Time without any Conſciouſneſs of Shame or Remorſe, will wound ſome abſent Friend, who perhaps has done him no Injury, in the moſt ſenſible Part of all, that of his Reputation; and all this for nothing more than a ſhort-liv'd, ungenerous, ill-natur'd Pleaſure. When Characters are attack'd, it gives a good-natured Man a noble Opportunity of exerting all his Abilities in Defence of them: If one Part is particularly aimed at, which he has not an Opportunity of defending, he will endeavour ſecretly to turn the Converſation upon ſome agreeable Qualification which ſhews itſelf in the ſame Perſon. This kind Office we may have very frequent Opportunities of doing, for there are few to be met with ſo entirely abandoned, but what ſome agreeable Allay is to be found in their Character: And how much more exalted and elegant a Satiſ-

faction

faction muſt a genourous Mind receive from being the common Advocate and Patron of Mankind, than for ſetting up for their grand Accuſer and Informer!

RAILLERY is often but a ſofter and more ſpecious Name for Scandal; and though it may be in ſome Meaſure a Refinement upon it, it is generally the more miſchievous as it attempts to varniſh over the Deformity and Malevolence of the Principle, and by that Means finds an eaſier Acceſs to our Hearts: This is a very agreeable and entertaining Talent ſo long as it dwells upon indifferent Subjects, and ſuch as are not of Importance enough to impair a Character. Particularities in Dreſs, Humour, or Behaviour may be very innocently attack'd and engage our Fancy with as much Diverſion as we pleaſe; little Imperfections, and ſlight Miſtakes in Life are often ſucceſsfully laugh'd away by Perſons who have any tolerable Skill in this Art of Ridicule; nor does it ſtop even at this Point, for it has ſometimes forced a Bluſh from the moſt abandoned and inſenſible of all ſerious Conſiderations: But when we intend that it ſhould meet with ſuch Effects as theſe, the Deſign muſt firſt be good, and a certain Degree of Affection and Eſteem muſt be ſhewn to that very Perſon that we make ſo free with: When Ill-nature is at the Bottom, as it too often is, it is ſo far from producing any good Uſes, that it ſometimes tends to the Diviſions of the ſtrict-

eſt

eſt Friendſhips and Alliances: But it is then moſt offenſive of all, when it dwells upon ſome undeſerved Misfortune which ſhould rather extort our Pity, than be the Subject of our Ridicule. It muſt be the Laughter of Fools only that Poverty and Diſtreſs can poſſibly provoke. Thoſe few therefore who bear this Faculty in their own Make and Conſtitution (for it is rather natural than acquired) ſhould take particular Care only to make uſe of upon proper Occaſions. Nothing ſurely can betray a greater Want of Judgment than undiſtinguiſhed Raillery, that falls foul upon every Accident or Perſon, whether Friend or Foe that lights in its Way. Should not we be apt to reckon him a Madman, who, becauſe he always carries his Sword about him, would draw it indiſcriminately upon every Body he met with, merely to ſhew his Skill in Fencing?

To deſtroy a Reputation then, ſeems to be one of the greateſt Injuries which we can poſſibly return to the moſt inveterate Enemy. But there is another full as great and dangerous which is as often offer'd to the moſt intimate and particular Friends; I mean, that of deſtroying what is more ſacred than Reputation itſelf, the Morals of thoſe we converſe with: And yet how often is this Offence committed by giving a looſe to Fancy, and dwelling upon indecent Subjects, either directly, or by Alluſion, which gradually tend to the final Violations of Virtue and Modeſty. This is the

more

more intolerable, as it is often to be met with among thoſe very Perſons who pretend to be the greateſt Conniſſeurs in Forms and Decencies. But there cannot ſurely be any Poſſibility of offending againſt good Manners, if it is not a Breach of it in the higheſt Degree to force a painful Bluſh from ſome modeſt and ingenious Companion, or, what is ſtill worſe, to remove at laſt by eaſy Degrees, that Conſciouſneſs and Expreſſion of Shame which was before the Guardian of his Virtue. Vile, direct and open Obſcenities, that do not attempt ſo much as to conceal their Groſſneſs under ſome artful Veil, or diſtant Alluſion, ought to be conſidered as ſo many extraordinary Violences committed againſt the Laws of Decency and Order; and inſtead of meeting with a verbal Reſentment, deſerve rather the Laſh of an Executioner; eſpecially, when they are obtruded, as they generally are upon the Female World, where the Delicacy of their Nature ſhould make ſuch Indecencies the more diſagreeable and ſhocking: Nor muſt even thoſe by any Means imagine themſelves within the Pale of ſtrict Modeſty, who, though they do not openly offend, yet have Art enough to convey an indecent Sentiment in ſo delicate and eaſy a Manner, as to make it ſteal upon our Imaginations before we are aware of it: This it muſt be confeſs'd expreſſes ſome regard of Decency, and as it ſeems to ſlip away rather by Accident than Deſign, is often nothing more than a ſudden Start of a warm Fancy,

while

while Judgment ſits in a leſs obſerving Poſture, and holds a ſlacker Rein. The Fault lies in indulging the Diſpoſition, and taking a Pleaſure in ſuch wanton Sallies: They who are guilty of this, lay a Snare for the Virtue of their Friends, and only act the more ſecretly in order to take it unguarded, becauſe it is too powerful for an open Attack: The chaſteſt Tempers are often inſenſibly warmed by ſuch Inſinuations as theſe; and the Veil of Modeſty, in which the Thought is dreſt, makes us the more curious to grow familiar with it.

But it may perhaps be unneceſſary to enter any farther into a Liſt of ſuch Offences as theſe, as they are ſo very conſpicuous and glaring, that they can hardly eſcape the Cenſure and Obſervation even of thoſe that are guilty of them: Profaneneſs and Immorality of any Sort whatever have ſuch apparent Conſequences that they always proceed from a Fault in the Will, rather than from any Error in the Underſtanding: A great many of this Kind might be mentioned, but as they are ſo obvious to every Body's Notice, the few remaining Pages that are to be engaged in theſe vicious Characters, ſhall rather be laid out in obſerving upon ſuch Breaches of Senſe and Decency, which often work ſo deceitfully, that they are entirely concealed from the Perſon that they infect, or elſe appear to him as ſo many Beauties and Embelliſhments in his Converſation. Theſe, though they are of a ſlighter Sort, and make Men rather diſ-

agreeable than criminal, yet often caſt ſo great a Blemiſh upon a Character as to make us entirely blind to a great many very noble Qualities, that would otherwiſe appear in it.

It will be no Injuſtice done to Affectation to place this the very firſt upon the Roll of Abſurdities: For there is no other Offence in the World that aſſumes ſo many various Shapes as this, nor that appears at the ſame Time ſo diſagreeable in all: There is ſome thing ſo very forc'd and aukward in all its Geſtures and Motions, that let it appear in whatever Dreſs it pleaſes, it never has Judgment enough to fit it agreeably to itſelf, and therefore only betrays to all the World that it is ſomething borrowed from ſome other Perſon. For if ſome peculiar Air or Manner ſits ever ſo gracefully upon the Perſon from whom we chuſe to borrow it, yet if Nature did not intend it for ourſelves, we ſhall make a very diſtaſteful and ridiculous Figure in it: To know what to pick out of People's Characters worthy of Imitation, and to be able to imitate the ſame with Eaſe and Judgment, is perhaps as difficult a Task as any in the World: And yet there is hardly any other Art in Life, that has ſo many Pretenders to it: Nay, as if it was too eaſy in itſelf, we often endeavour to make it ſtill the more difficult, and fix upon ſome particular Delicacies which are the moſt diſtant from our own Talents: Who would not laugh at, or rather be grave enough to pity *Luſciſca* with an unhappy Squint affecting

ing the familiar Glances of the beautiful *Aminda*? And can any thing be more ridiculous than *Ruricola*, with his harſh untuneful Note attempting at the labour'd Softneſs of ſome *Italian* Air?

But if it ſhews a Want of Judgment to ſort out ſome particular Characters, and to endeavour to transfer into our own, Things excellent in themſelves, but what are directly oppoſite to our own Qualifications; it is more injudicious ſtill to affect other People's Miſtakes, and to make their Imperfections our own; and yet there are many who labour ſo very hard to expoſe themſelves, that they have Indiſcretion enough to fall into this never failing Method of doing it moſt effectually: Hence ſome endeavour to diſtinguiſh themſelves by an affected Liſp, while a ſtudied Languiſh has been miſtaken for an irreſiſtable Charm in another: Frights and Shrieks are Arts that many apply to in Order to fix upon themſelves the Eyes of a whole Company. In ſhort, the Gifts of Nature are all inverted by thoſe of this uncommon and peculiar Taſte; And want of Memory, Sight, Health, Apprehenſion, with a thouſand pretty Blunders, are ſo many Diſtinctions and Ornaments, that are to ſet them above the Level of the Generality of the World; But this is for the moſt Part the Recourſe of thoſe only who have nothing to recommend themſelves to the Admiration of thoſe about them; and are therefore mad enough to chuſe rather to be taken

Notice of for their Impertinencies, than to be look'd upon as Cyphers in the Creation.

THERE is nothing indeed, more diſagreeable in Converſation than to betray by any Means a Deſire of Diſtinguiſhing oneſelf, and a Fondneſs of appearing ſuperior to every Perſon that we converſe with: If we are ever ſo happy in any particular Talent, we may eaſily deſtroy the Praiſe and Eſteem which we ſhould otherwiſe enjoy from it, by ſhewing too openly the inward Satisfaction which we conceive from it ourſelves: When we thus endeavour to puſh the Conqueſt too far, it does but loſe us Ground, and takes away from us that very Part which we had ſecured before. It is upon this Account that Men, very eminent for their Wit and Humour, ſometimes diſpleaſe as often as they entertain; and by being too ambitious of Applauſe, grow entirely unconverſible. For though nothing can be more entertaining to Men of a polite Taſte, than a little mixture of Wit and Humour, which adds indeed the brighteſt Luſtre to Converſation, yet they muſt be but thinly rang'd, and plac'd at proper Diſtances: When they crowd too frequently upon us, and form a perpetual Glare, they but betray an unhappy Oſtentation at the Bottom; and we no longer look upon them as deſign'd for our Entertainment, but as intended only to indulge the Vanity of the Perſon who is ſo laviſh in the Diſpoſal of them.

THIS however, as abſurd as it is, even in the Exceſs entertains us ſo far as to make ſome Amends for the Vanity it feeds: There are others, who from the ſame Rage of ſhining, and not ſupported by the leaſt Pretenſions to it, are far more intolerable than thoſe that are guilty that Way. This is a Set of People who are always uppermoſt in their own Thoughts, and therefore think they may aſſert a Right of being ſo in other People's. Their own dear ſelves are always their favourite Themes, and no Affairs of their own are ſo trifling and inconſiderable but they muſt be forced upon every Body who is ſo unhappy as to fall in their Way: Imperfections in their Conſtitution, Faults of Servants, the bad Management of every Body about them, and their own wiſe Conduct, ſo far forſooth ſuperior to that of the Reſt of the World, are the only Topicks of Diſcourſe that they can take the leaſt Delight in: It is very pleaſant to hear one of this Caſt repeating to you a Compliment which he has lately received, and endeavouring, by the broadeſt Hints he can, to perſuade you that the greateſt Part of the World are his Admirers: But this moſt unſucceſsful Principle tends directly oppoſite to the very End it would purſue: For the Art of placing our ſelves uppermoſt in other People's Thoughts, is to be the leaſt in our own.

THERE is another Fault almoſt equally intolerable with this unreaſonable Fondneſs of Ourſelves; and that is, a Fondneſs for our

own

own Sentiments and Opinions: Nothing can be more offenſive than a poſitive Temper that claims the Title Infallibility upon every Subject that is talk'd of: There is, in Truth, no Converſing with ſuch as theſe; for one muſt be often reduc'd either to the Neceſſity of tamely reſigning to them an Argument which one has far the beſt of, or elſe of ſpending perhaps an whole Evening in an endleſs Diſpute, where no Conceſſions will be made if ever ſo neceſſary. It is a Duty that every Man owes to himſelf, to defend, as far as it appears reaſonable, any Opinion which upon cool Reflection he imagines to be right: But it is at the ſame Time the Height of Pride to be abſolutely reſolved not to change any Sentiment, upon any Account whatever, that we have once happened to have aſſerted. Such People often liſt themſelves under a Set of Notions, which as they grow wiſer, they would be very glad to deſert, if they could, with any tolerable Grace.

SOMEWHAT very much akin to this unreaſonably forward Temper, is that abſurd Humour of delivering every Thing we have Occaſion to ſay, in a deciſive ſententious Manner. This is but another Method of proclaiming to all the World, that we imagine our own Judgment ſuperior to every other Perſon's: No other Principle but that can induce us to determine upon what Points where Men perhaps of much greater Underſtanding than ourſelves, have very ſubſtantial Reaſons for being

oppoſite

oppoſite in their Opinions: It is a moſt ridiculous Piece of Vanity to put oneſelf into a Place of an Arbitrator, and to expect that all Controverſies ſhould be decided by ſome empty Sentence of our own, utter'd with a great Shew of Wiſdom and Experience, and made ſtill more intolerable by an aukward Solemnity. Such Pedants as theſe ſhould confine themſelves to their Schools, and remember that the Reſt of Mankind are by no Means oblig'd to ſhew them the ſame Indulgence and Reſpect which they demanded from their private Diſciples: Would we perſuade in earneſt, we muſt enter upon a quite different Scheme from this, and bend over to other People's Sentiments in Order to inſinuate our own.

Mr. *Spence* in his Criticiſm upon the late Mr. *Pope*'s Tranſlation of the *Odyſſy*, very prettily obſerves; "That Mankind are not "ſo entirely averſe to receive Adviſe, as it is "generally imagined; the Misfortune is, that "Few are qualified to give it in a proper Man-"ner". This ſeems to be a very juſt, though not a very common Reflection: For it muſt be own'd that it required a great deal of Art and Judgment to make Advice agreeable to the Perſon we beſtow it upon: It often proves at beſt but an unthankful Office, and falls entirely ſhort of the Succeſs that is intended: But the chief Reaſon is, that thoſe who give it, either enter into a Province for which they were never intended, or elſe do it rather to

in-

indulge a pettiſh Spleen, and cenſorious Humour in themſelves, than to reform their Friend. The great Secret ſeems to be This, that we ſhew an hearty Affection for the Intereſts, and a general Reſpect for the Underſtanding of the Perſon that we would endeavour to correct: In Order to make Men rather pleas'd than aſham'd at being made wiſer, inſtead of dictating to them in an imperious authoritative Way, we muſt appear to borrow from their own Invention the very Hints that we have been all along labouring to inſtil into their Minds.

But we muſt be particularly careful of indulging a cenſorious Diſpoſition: It is from this ungenerous and ill-natur'd Temper, that we ſee Men ſometimes induſtriouſly blind to the Virtue of their Friends, only that they may have a ſtronger Sight of their Foibles, and Infirmities: Such have not Good Nature enough to commend, nor Good Senſe enough to cenſure with Diſcretion: If they attack real Faults, they take a Pleaſure in attacking them with greater Malevolence and Averſion than their Slightneſs ſeems to demand, and and very often falls foul upon Things which are of a doubtful Nature. Sometimes the very Thing that ſhould extort their Praiſe, provokes their Spleen; and they hate and deſpiſe you upon no other Account than becauſe a univerſal Fame has finiſhed your Character, and ſet a general Seal upon your Reputation.

WERE there a Neceſſity of going over to one of the Extreams, it would ſhew more Humanity at leaſt to commend at Random, than to cenſure univerſally. And though this would expreſs as great a Weakneſs in the Underſtanding, it might, however claim a readier Indulgence, as it offended on the more generous Side. But even here we muſt be extremely cautious, ſince the Credit which we give another, if he is undeſerving of it, may deſtroy our own: This is very often expoſing one ſelf to an unneceſſary Danger, and hazarding one's own Reputation, which might have been ſecure, if we had not intereſted ourſelves in another Perſon's. To commend with Reaſon redounds to the Honour of our own Character, and ſhews that we are qualified to form a Judgment of Mankind: This is an Office which we owe to Friendſhip; and ſuch a warrantable Defence may be expected from us, even at the Hazard of our ſelves, and our own Reputation: But to interpoſe on the Side of any Perſon, upon the moſt ſuperficial Knowledge of him, and to be reſolved to defend him, at all Adventures, is as contemptible as to offer one ſelf to be a Second to any Perſon that had a Mind to employ one, only for the Pleaſure of the Engagement.

THIS however betrays only a Want of Judgment, and is much leſs intolerable than downright deſigning Flattery: There is not indeed a meaner Character in the whole Crea-

tion, than that of a fawning Paraſite, who pays his Court to every one that will receive him, and is often obliged to be officious in the Praiſe of the very Man he heartily contemns. This is a Proſtitution equally low and abject with that of thoſe miſerable and abandoned Wretches, who are paid for their Smiles, and ſell you their Embraces. It muſt be owned that Flattery can ſometimes put on ſo delicate a Dreſs, as to betray us for a Time into a ſhort-liv'd Affection for it; but good Senſe will ever be able to take off its falſe Colours, and will as ſurely deteſt it in its genuine and native Complection.

VERY near allied to ſuch a ſervile Obſequiouſneſs as this, is an undiſtinguiſhed Civility, and an aukward Complaiſance, that treats every Body with the ſame Degree of Reſpect: But this is a moſt uſeleſs, as well as extravagant Officiouſneſs; for Favours of any Sort, when they are ſo eaſily come at, and are ſo eaſily beſtowed, continue no longer to be ſuch: Nor do we think it any thing conſiderable or worth Acceptance, to have him at our Service, who declares himſelf at every Man's Command. In ſhort, to ſhew an equal Reſpect to every Perſon we converſe with, is, in Effect, to ſhew a decent and proper Reſpect to no one Perſon we converſe with.

IT is indeed ſurpriſing to obſerve what unlikely Methods, the greateſt Part of the World rely upon, with a Deſign to form their Characters, and to ſhine in Converſation:

tion: There are ſome who think to win Mankind by their immoderate Freedoms and Familiarities, while others are equally extravagant in the contrary Extream; and falſely imagine, that an extraordinary Reſervedneſs paſſes for a Mark of ſuperior Wiſdom: One takes upon himſelf to be the Mouth of his Company, and never fails to ſtun you with his perpetual Alarum; while another of an abſent Make hardly knows, till he leaves the Room, where, or in what a Set of Friends he has been engaged. Common Forms and Decencies are neglected by ſome as too trifling Conſiderations, though they never are, or ought to be excuſed in any, but in old Gentlemen, whoſe Age and Experience ſecure them from Obſervation and Ridicule: Nor muſt we be too nice in not deſcending to the moſt indifferent Subjects of Diſcourſe, if they happen to be the reigning Topicks of the Time: The deepeſt Scholar may give his Opinion upon a Dreſs or Faſhion, without deſtroying his Character as ſuch.

A VERY moderate Share of Penetration and Experience will be able to diſcover a great many more Offences beſides thoſe that have been mentioned here; a nicer Eye could eaſily remark upon greater Delicacies, and yet perhaps leave ſome to be found out by another ſtill more diſcerning than it ſelf.

BUT even upon this imperfect View, we ſhall find it not ſo ſurpriſing as it is commonly imagined, that ſo few arrive at any

tolerable Succeſs in this Art of Pleaſing. To be ſucceſsful here, there muſt be a Compound of all the various Graces and Ornaments that go towards the finiſhing of the compleateſt Character: Good Senſe improv'd by an extenſive Knowledge of Men and Manners, a gentle good natured Diſpoſition guided and directed by Diſcretion, a Love of Truth, with a ſtudied Eaſe and Agreeableneſs in our Manner of conveying it, a modeſt Diſtruſt of our own Sentiments, and a ſtrict Obſervance of the Decencies of Things, are ſome of the neceſſary Parts, that among a great many others have each their peculiar Place in the Forming ſo unuſual, and ſo happy a Piece. Theſe graceful Figures, though they may in publick Life be drawn out to greater Lengths and Proportions, diſplay themſelves in theſe ſocial Scenes with the ſame Beauty and Exactneſs in Miniature.

AN

ESSAY

ON

SOLITUDE.

By a GENTLEMAM of St. *John's* College, *Oxford.*

LONDON:

Printed at the PRINTING-OFFICE, near *Chancery-Lane, Holborn.*

ESSAY

ON

SOLITUDE.

BRITISH MUSEUM
20 SEP 52
50
NOV 14

AN ESSAY, ON SOLITUDE.

AS it is the peculiar Happineſs of Mankind above all inferior Beings to be fit for Society; ſo it is the particular Advantage of a wiſe Man, above thoſe of his own Species, to be fit for Solitude: A free Air, a voluble Tongue, and a ſhort Stock of Common-place Wit are ſufficient to ſet a Man up for a good Companion; but he muſt be a Perſon of an extraordinary Genius, and uncommon Reflection, muſt have his Mind furniſh'd with a vaſt Variety of the nobleſt Ideas, who is able to ſpend his Solitary Hours with Pleaſure and Improvement; and is not oblig'd to the Intercourſe of Friends for the Benefit of Converſation. Thoſe who are bleſt with this happy Caſt of Mind, never want Employment, never want Diverſion worthy a reaſonable Creature; can find Harmony in the Silence of a Grotto; can turn a Deſert into a Muſæum, and by withdrawing from the vain

Hurry

Hurry of Things which are about them, can retire to a little World, as it were, within their own Breasts, and almost of their own creating: So that if by retreating from Mankind, they seem to resign any thing of Humanity, 'tis but in Order to assume more of the Divinity: For then the Soul being less solicited by the Objects of Sense, acts more like itself, and enjoys more exquisite Delights than it possibly can receive by their most grateful Impressions: The Universe affords it a glorious Field for Contemplation, and its own Operations supply as noble a Subject for Reflection. Fancy offers to regale it with painted Scenes, and flowery Landskips; and the Judgment invites to a more solid and reasonable Satisfaction in pursuing Truth through a thousand Meanders; in viewing a Thought in all its various Lights, and by making perpetual Advances into Knowledge and Virtue: Noisy Mirth, and empty Laughter are perhaps Strangers to the Solitary and Contemplative; but those never want that sedate Joy, that generous Triumph, that elegant Harmony of Mind, that are constant Attendants to the Studious and Retir'd; and are enlarg'd by every Step towards a farther Improvement; while the Rest of Mankind are driving in a Tempest, shipwreck'd by Storms, or overset by prosperous Gales; these securely staying in their private Harbour, calm and serene enjoy the troubled Prospect; the harmless Thunder rolls far above their Heads, and the dashing of the

Waves

Waves only lulls them into a more profound Tranquility: If a Man's own Experience was not ſufficient to ſupercede pedantick Quotations, one might eaſily mention all the great Authors of Antiquity upon a Subject, which they always celebrated and eſteemed. They are oblig'd to their learned Obſcurities for all the preſent ſplendor of their Fame; they retired from Mankind to be greater Benefactors to them, and by keeping little Company with their Cotemporaries, became the Companions of all wiſe Men in ſucceeding Ages: Theſe were the great Admirers then, and are ſtill as great Improvers of a retired Life: He that is acquainted with them, cannot deſire a more entertaining Converſation, or more agreeable Friends: He is ſurrounded with all the Advantages, without the Inconveniencies of Company, and is raviſhed with the blended Delights of Society and Solitude. When ſuch a Man betakes himſelf to his lonely Retirements, he does but withdraw from the vulgar Herd of Mankind to converſe with Heroes, Philoſophers, Orators, and Poets, that he may brighten his Conceptions with their reflected Rays, enjoy the Benefit of all their Labours, and carry on a tacit Intercourſe with the nobleſt Genius's that ever human Nature has produced. I think this is an artificial Way of looſing the Soul a little from the Bonds of Matter, to let it range a while with the Beings of its own Nature, and conſult the Manes of

the illuſtrious Dead. In ſuch a Solitude how ſmoothly do the ſilent Minutes fly! How are the Paſſions huſh'd aſleep, or charm'd to Attention! How is the Mind tranſported with the facetious Wit of one, the proud Reaſoning of another, and the exact Judgment of all! How pure is their Language, how juſt are their Sentiments, how various, and yet how equally pleaſing are all their peculiar Graces! compared with theſe, how inſipid is all other Converſation! How undiverting all other Society! Who would not be in Solitude for ever, that he might be for ever with ſuch Companions? This is a Happineſs great indeed! too great for human Nature; Man muſt be a ſociable Creature, almoſt whether he will or no: The Body demands neceſſary Refreſhment, and the Mind calls for neceſſary Relaxation; it faints under an inceſſant Purſuit after Knowledge, and bewilders itſelf in a long Maze of Thought: All its Powers if continually ſtrained to ſo high a Key, loſe their proper Tone; and when very much accuſtomed to this ſilent, this ſolitary Harmony, are apt to jar a little in a loud and numerous Conſort; ſo that he who always converſes with himſelf, will, in a ſhort Time be as unable as unwilling to converſe with others: The Advantage of Company, and of Retirement, are of ſuch a Nature, that whoſoever would enjoy either in Perfection muſt alternately enjoy both; muſt let one be a perpetual Foil to the other, that

their

their diverſified Pleaſure may be always new; that Solitude may render him more accompliſh'd for a diverting and innocent Society, and Society return him with greater Alacrity to an honourable and improving Solitude.

F I N I S.